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The Influence of  
Sainte-Beuve on Matthew Arnold

Romance Languages

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THE INFLUENCE OF SAINTE-BEUVE  
ON MATTHEW ARNOLD

BY

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A. B. University of Michigan, 1911

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THESIS

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the

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I HEREBY RECOMMEND THAT THE THESIS PREPARED UNDER MY SUPERVISION BY

JAY KARL DITCHY

ENTITLED THE INFLUENCE OF SAINTE-BEUVE ON MATTHEW ARNOLD

BE ACCEPTED AS FULFILLING THIS PART OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE

DEGREE OF MASTER~~Y~~ OF ARTS

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## THE INFLUENCE OF SAINTE-BEUVE

## ON MATTHEW ARNOLD

## Introduction

Matthew Arnold's literary activity may be divided into three parts, - his poetry, his literary criticism and his social philosophy. It is quite impossible to separate the last two completely; for, in many cases, the one is the other and their close inter-relationship does not permit of a differentiation. For this reason, and also to avoid a needless complication of the subject, we shall treat them together as his essays or prose work, without pointing out specifically what parts of them are criticism and what parts social philosophy.

In regard to Arnold's poems, although they are at present coming more and more to be recognized as possessing a high degree of merit, in Arnold's time their excellence was not so generally appreciated. The reason for this is that Arnold's poetry is of an intellectual type which gains recognition very slowly. For the purpose of our investigation, we must acquiesce in the opinion prevalent in Arnold's own time and consider his poetry simply as a literary form in which he exercised himself; whereas, his prose works, in the two divisions named above, become for us the activity that won him his prominent place in English literature and gave him an influence that is felt in English prose even today.



Matthew Arnold's position in English literature is very important. At a time when English criticism was at a decidedly low ebb and public opinion was given to scorning it in comparison with creative literary activity, in great contrast to foreign literatures in which criticism was flourishing as the most prominent literary form of the day, Arnold called the attention of his people to the loss English literature was suffering through the neglect of this kind of literary activity.

"Of the literature of France and Germany", he tells us,<sup>1</sup> "as of the intellect of Europe in general, the main effort, for now many years, has been a critical effort; ... almost the last thing for which one would come to English literature is just that very thing which Europe now most desires, - criticism." Having pointed out the want, he set himself to fill it and succeeded admirably; for English criticism dates its rebirth and present flourishing condition to Arnold's critical essays. The first of these, On Translating Homer, appeared in 1861, when Arnold was thirty-nine years old. Then followed Maurice de Guérin in Fraser's Magazine, January 1863; Eugenie de Guérin in The Cornhill Magazine, June 1863; Joubert in The National Review, January 1864; The Literary Influence of Academies in The Cornhill Magazine, August 1864; and The Function of Criticism at the Present Time in The National Review, November 1864. In 1865, these were collected in Essays in Criticism, called

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1. Quoted from On Translating Homer, 1861, in The Function of Criticism, Works, III, 3.





Essays in Criticism, First Series after the appearance of Essays in Criticism, Second Series in 1888.

But, aside from his work in literary criticism, Arnold's influence on public opinion in England, especially the expression of it in books and periodicals, is very marked. His famous article on Sweetness and Light appeared in The Cornhill Magazine for July 1867. In 1869 it was republished in the collection entitled Culture and Anarchy in which were included similar essays published in various magazines between 1867 and 1869. Therein he divides the British public into three classes, - Barbarians, Philistines and Populace, representing respectively the nobility, the middle class, and the working class. The Philistines he shows to be in control of the public intellect. Intrenched in an extraordinary material prosperity, they were giving themselves over to the exaltation of the base and common. To this they added a vicious disdain and scorn for culture, and in their overweening self-conceit had even dared to condemn culture as "the very silliest cant of the day."<sup>1</sup> This tendency Arnold combatted with his doctrine of Sweetness and Light.<sup>2</sup> In contrast to Philistinism, he exalted culture and the idea of harmonious perfection. He pointed out the narrowness of the Philistine view and

1. Works V, 2.

2. Works III, 1ff.



the falseness of its fundamental worship of the practical. By his insistence he restored the humanistic values to their accustomed high position, - no mean achievement in a materialistic age and in a country where the commercial spirit had so strong a hold as in England.

Sainte-Beuve, dean of French critics if not of all critics, lived from 1804 until 1869. Like Arnold, Sainte-Beuve published poetry during his early years, but, as in Arnold's case, Sainte-Beuve's poetry was not sympathetically received by his contemporaries, though a later generation is more inclined to admire it. He also tried his hand at novel-writing but again failed to win popular favor. He was markedly successful, however, in his critical articles. He began to write for the Globe in 1824, when he was twenty years old, and, having failed in the other lines, he confined himself to criticism chiefly in the form of the intimate short article or causerie, published in the Globe and other newspapers. These short articles deal with all sorts of personages, literary, political and otherwise, who had sometimes written very little. Sainte-Beuve regarded criticism not as the mere dissection of a work, but as a means of exciting the average reader to an interest in and an appreciation of literature in general. He did this by giving an interesting description of the personality of an author,





and then pointing out unobtrusively the importance of his work and its place in the development of literature in general. These weekly essays, published through a long series of years, were reprinted in several collections. We have, in addition to the essays, the monumental Port Royal, which gives an intimate description of the life and ideals of that most interesting movement.

Arnold regarded Sainte-Beuve with a frank admiration which he does not hesitate to express. In a letter to his mother, March 20, 1861,<sup>1</sup> he calls him "the first of living critics". In the essay On Translating Homer he calls him "the master of us all in criticism."<sup>2</sup> This essay On Translating Homer was published in 1861 and was the first of Arnold's works in literary criticism. The expression of so positive an opinion of Sainte-Beuve's work and position as a critic would obviously point to Arnold's already having made a study of Sainte-Beuve's critical work. The latter had published previously the larger part of his works and had but eight more years of life remaining to him. Of his critical works, there had previously appeared the Portraits littéraires, 1843; Portraits de femmes,

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1. Works XIII, 176.

2. Works V, 285.



1845; the Portraits contemporains, 1846; and the Causeries du lundi, which were collected in 1861, having previously appeared in newspapers.

If Arnold had read the critical works with enough application to feel justified in pronouncing a public judgment upon them, we may imagine that he had read the other works of Sainte-Beuve also. If he admired Sainte-Beuve to the extent of calling him the "first of living critics" and "the master of us all in criticism" we are led to expect a certain influence of Sainte-Beuve in the works of Arnold. This influence we propose to study in this paper, and to show to what degree it affected Arnold's poetry, his criticism, and the sociological philosophy which is bound up in his criticism. We shall also touch upon the personal relations of the two men, and for this we must rely upon second-hand sources, as none of their correspondence with each other seems to have been published. We, therefore, must limit ourselves to seeking <sup>in</sup> the ideas, methods, and general practice of Arnold parallels and similarities to the ideas, methods, and general practice of Sainte-Beuve and determining the extent and validity of the apparent influence.





# Chapter I

## Arnold's General Sympathy with French Literature and Ideas

In connection with Arnold's relation to Sainte-Beuve, a consideration of his general relation to French literature and institutions will not be without profit. Various critics have noticed the tendency of Arnold to look upon France with a respectful admiration and to present things French as worthy of imitation by his fellow-Britons. J. M. Robertson tells us in his article on Matthew Arnold in Modern Humanists,<sup>1</sup> "He could banter without indecorum and scoff without bluster, - French accomplishments which he pressed upon his countrymen." Another of his critics, George McLean Harper, writing on Sainte-Beuve in French Men of Letters<sup>2</sup> says of this trait in Arnold, "Matthew Arnold's habit and prose style owed much to French influence." Continuing, he adds a remark indicating even more important French influences upon Arnold. He says,<sup>3</sup> "His one oft-repeated idea was that British thought needed the reasonableness and amenity of a criticism akin to French criticism."

\* \* \* \* \*

1. London 1891, p. 143.

2. London and Philadelphia 1909, p. 346.

3. French Men of Letters, p. 346.



Arnold's feelings upon the subject are expressed even more forcibly in his own words in the essay on The Literary Influence of Academies. Here he tells us,<sup>1</sup> "Openmindedness and flexibility of intelligence are remarkable characteristics of the French people in modern times; at any rate, they strikingly characterize them as compared with us."

Just how early Arnold began to have this admiration for the French, it is impossible to state. We have no record of what work in French he had done in school nor of what authors he had studied. However, his earliest reference to this influence indicates that this idea was firmly established in his mind at an early date. In the second of his published letters, one addressed to his mother, and dated March 7, 1848,<sup>2</sup> we read, "In a few years people will understand better why the French are the most civilized of European peoples, when they see how fictitious our manners and civility have been." And a similar passage is found in a letter written to his sister a few days later,<sup>3</sup> "You must by this time see what people mean by placing France politically in the van of Europe; it is the intelligence of their idea-moved masses which makes them politically as far superior to the insensible

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1. Works III, 5.
2. Works XIII, 5.
3. Works XIV, 7.



masses of England as to the Russian serfs." Thus in 1848, twelve years before the appearance of his first literary essay,<sup>1</sup> we find this influence so potent in Arnold's mind that he begins preaching about the French to his immediate family. In a letter to his mother in 1864<sup>2</sup> he says, "I have such a respect for a certain circle of men, perhaps the most truly cultivated in the world, which exists at Paris," and in another letter to her in 1865,<sup>3</sup> "It is good for us to attend to the French, who are so unlike us." The last two quotations make it evident that this sympathy for the French had persisted until 1865, which is the date of the publication, in a collection, of the Essays in Criticism which had previously appeared in various periodicals.

When we examine Arnold's critical work, our idea of French influence seems strikingly confirmed. His first venture of this sort, On Translating Homer, comprised three lectures which he gave at Oxford in his capacity of Professor of Poetry. We may pass over this work as a direct product of his classical training and his professorial activity, and proceed to the other essays, which have to do with his critical campaign. Of these, the first two, and two others

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1. On Translating Homer 1861.
2. Works XIII, 287.
3. Works XIV, 7.





published soon after, all four of which were included in the Essays in Criticism in 1865, owe their inspiration to French sources. The first two mentioned above are Maurice de Guérin, which appeared in Fraser's Magazine in January 1863, and Eugénie de Guérin, which appeared in June of the same year in The Cornhill Magazine. The fact that these two attempts or experiments in the field of criticism were made while he was still in the formative period is very significant. Two other essays, later included in this collection, which were inspired by French subjects, are Joubert, January 1864, in The National Review and The Literary Influence of Academies in The Cornhill Magazine, August 1864. In the complete collection which came out in 1865, we find four out of ten essays with subjects taken directly from the French.

Arnold's next critical work, On the Study of Celtic Literature,<sup>1</sup> is generally admitted to have been inspired by Renan's essay on La poésie des races celtiques in the Essais de morale et de critique.<sup>2</sup> In a letter to Mrs. Foster, December 24, 1859, we read, "The best book of his (Renan's) for you to read is his Essais de morale et de critique, lately published. I have read few things for a long time with more pleasure than a long

\* \* \* \* \*

1. London 1867.

2. Paris 1859.



essay with which the book concludes, 'Sur la poésie des races celtiques'. I have long felt we owed far more, spiritually and artistically, to the Celtic races than the somewhat coarse Germanic intelligence already perceived, and been increasingly satisfied at our own semi-Celtic origin, which, as I fancy, gives us the power if we will use it of comprehending the nature of both races." The interest in the Celts here awakened by Renan evidently culminated eight years later in the Study of Celtic Literature, another evidence of French influence upon Arnold's works.

In the Mixed Essays, published as a collection in 1879, three out of a total of nine are directly traceable to French sources. One is an essay on George Sand, whom Arnold had met and whose works he, of course, had read. This essay made its first appearance in The Fortnightly Review, June 1877. The other two articles from French sources are A French Critic on Milton, originally published in The Quarterly Review, January 1877; and A French Critic on Goethe, which had made its initial appearance in The Quarterly Review, January 1878. The critic in both these cases is Edmond Schérer and the articles careful reviews of his views on Milton and Goethe.

\* \* \* \* \*





Several others of Arnold's articles are also on French subjects. In the Essays in Criticism, Second Series, we have the article on Amiel, a philosopher of Geneva, author of a melancholy Journal intime. Arnold also wrote the article on Sainte-Beuve in the Encyclopaedia Britannica and on the occasion of Sainte-Beuve's death in 1869, he wrote the obituary notice which appeared in The Academy of November 13 of that year.<sup>1</sup> These, as the other articles mentioned, show the persistence in Arnold of a reverent interest in French literature and ideas, and a disposition to be guided in his own work by them. This general interest in things French goes hand in hand with Arnold's interest in Sainte-Beuve and the influence traceable to general French ideas is paralleled by the influence traceable to Sainte-Beuve's ideas and methods.

\* \* \* \* \*

1. p. 31.



## Chapter II

### Personal Relations of Arnold and Sainte-Beuve

It is difficult to determine just when Arnold's personal relations with Sainte-Beuve began. Arnold very unwisely forbade the publication of a biography of himself after his death and, by so doing, deprived us of a very important source of information. No letter from the one to the other appears to have been published, and thus another source of light has been cut off. Hence we are reduced to stating that Arnold's interest in Sainte-Beuve having been aroused, he probably managed to have himself presented to the French critic in 1858, when he was sent abroad by the government on the school-inspection trip of which he later published an account in his Popular Education of France.<sup>1</sup> Sainte-Beuve was very cordial to him, and invited him to dinner. This dinner he has described in a letter to his wife, written August 21, 1859, as follows:<sup>2</sup> "Sainte-Beuve gave me an excellent dinner and was in full vein of conversation, which, as his conversation is about the best to be heard in France, was charming. After dinner, he took <sup>me</sup> back to his own house where we had tea. ... I stayed with Sainte-Beuve till

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1. Popular Education of France with Notices of that of Holland and Switzerland. London 1860, reprinted 1861.  
2. Works XIII, 138ff.



midnight and would not have missed my evening for all the world. I think he likes my caring so much about his criticism and appreciating his extraordinary tact and judgment in literature." The latter part of the quotation "caring so much about his criticism and appreciating his extraordinary tact and judgment" would indicate an established admiration for Sainte-Beuve, prior to the meeting and would make it appear that Arnold had taken advantage of his stay in Paris to bring about his introduction to Sainte-Beuve.

The continuance of this respect for the French critic on the part of Arnold is vouched for by a passage in a letter to his mother, written March 10, 1861, just after he had received a copy of Sainte-Beuve's Chateaubriand in which Arnold's poem on Obermann was translated. Here we read,<sup>1</sup> "It has given me very great pleasure ... What Sainte-Beuve says of me is charmingly said. I value his praise both in itself and because it carries one's name through the literary circles of Europe in a way that no English praise can carry it. But, apart from that, to anyone but a glutton of praise the whole value of it lies in the manner in which it is administered; and this is administered by the first of living critics and with a delicacy for which one would look in vain here."

\* \* \* \* \*

1. Works XIII, 176.





We find a like significant passage in a letter to his mother a propos of a mention of his criticism of Homer by Sainte-Beuve in the Constitutionnel, where we read, "what he said was charming, as what he says always is."<sup>1</sup> We see that the intimacy begun in 1859 has been kept up, perhaps by correspondence, though none of these letters <sup>is</sup> ~~are~~ available.

When Arnold was again sent abroad on school-business in 1865, he was once more received by Sainte-Beuve, who presented him to the Princesse Mathilde. He describes this in a letter to his mother, May 1, 1865.<sup>2</sup> He tells us naively in this place that when the princess complimented him upon his knowledge of France and French literature he replied that he had read the works of Sainte-Beuve, - knowing him to be a favorite of hers. Later in the same year,<sup>3</sup> he tells of reading the Causeries to pass the time on the train. These facts indicate how high a place Sainte-Beuve occupied in the opinion of Arnold and, in view of them, we are not surprised to hear Arnold call him "the master of us all in criticism."<sup>4</sup> After the death of Sainte-Beuve, Arnold evidently enjoyed recalling his relations with the deceased French critic, for he tells us in a

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1. Works XIII, 286.
2. Works XIII, 345.
3. Works XIV, 5.
4. Works V, 285.



letter to his sister in 1871,<sup>1</sup> two years after Sainte-Beuve's death, "The half-dozen letters of Sainte-Beuve's I have kept are a great pleasure to me." An emotion so profound as Arnold's admiration for Sainte-Beuve must necessarily have left an impress on the form, method, and ideas of his works and in Arnold this impress shows in his works as strongly as his sympathy is shown in their personal relations.

\* \* \* \* \*

1. Works XIV, 246.



## Chapter III

Influences of Sainte-Beuve  
observable in Arnold's Poetry

Until about 1860, Arnold had devoted himself to poetry; but the success of his On Translating Homer and the critical essays which followed led him to neglect verse from that time on. Arnold's poetry belongs, then, to the period before 1860. Any influences of Sainte-Beuve we may find in Arnold's poetry will interest us in showing that he early began to come under the sway of his admiration for the French critic.

Of the direct influence of Sainte-Beuve's poetry we find but one trace which has been noted by George McLean Harper in his volume on Sainte-Beuve<sup>1</sup> in the French Men of Letters series. A passage from Le dernier vœu from Vie, poésies, et pensées de Joseph Delorme,<sup>2</sup>

"Aimez-vous, couple heureux, et  
profitez de l'heure  
Pour plus d'un affligé qui  
souffre seul et pleure  
Ce soir semblera long."

seems to have suggested a similar idea in Matthew Arnold's Consolation<sup>3</sup>

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1. p. 348.

2. Poésies complètes I, 63, 1829.

3. Works I, 74, 1852.





"Two young, fair lovers,  
 Where the warm, June-wind,  
 Fresh from the summer fields  
 Plays fondly round them,  
 Stand, tranced in joy.

. . . . .

"With weak indulgence  
 Did the just Goddess  
 Lengthen their happiness,  
 She lengthened also  
 Distress elsewhere."

That Sainte-Beuve's poetry did not make a greater impression upon Arnold need not surprise us; for Arnold's admiration was for Sainte-Beuve's criticism and not for his poetry. He tells his mother in a letter, May 19, 1863,<sup>1</sup> "It is not on Sainte-Beuve's poems that his fame will rest. Sainte-Beuve's poems have all his talent in them but they have not the true charm of poetry." Other resemblances which we have been able to trace, come from the prose portion of Sainte-Beuve's literary activity. Saintsbury in his History of Criticism<sup>2</sup> has noticed an interesting example.

\* \* \* \* \*

1. Works XIII, 265.

2. III, 320.



Sainte-Beuve, speaking of Stagirus in the Etude sur Chateaubriand<sup>1</sup> describes his case as that "mélancholie croissante qui cherche un refuge dans le cloître." He also speaks of Stagirus in his article on Saint-Marc Girardin.<sup>2</sup> Arnold later wrote a poem upon Stagirus wherein this note of monastic melancholy is predominant. The following extract well illustrates this:<sup>3</sup>

"Thou, who dost dwell alone -  
 Thou, who dost know thine own -  
 Thou, to whom all are known  
 From the cradle to the grave -  
     Save, oh! save.  
 From the world's temptations,  
 From tribulations,  
 From that fierce anguish  
 Wherein we languish,  
 From that torpor deep  
 Wherein we lie asleep,  
 Heavy as death, cold as the grave,  
     Save, oh! save.

This striking elaboration of the afore-quoted text into what might almost pass for a monkish

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1. p. 114. 1859.
2. *Causeries du lundi* I, 18. 1849.
3. *Works* I, 54. 1869.



litany makes Saintsbury ask in the passage on this subject, "I wonder whether Mr. Arnold got Stagirius from Sainte-Beuve or from Saint-Marc-Girardin, who seems to have extracted him originally from the Golden-mouth? ... These interesting suggestions of suggestion ... occur with Sainte-Beuve more often than with most men."

Another example of the influence of Sainte-Beuve's prose writings upon Arnold's poetry is noted by George McLean Harper in his Sainte-Beuve<sup>1</sup> and later by Irving Babbitt in Masters of Modern French Criticism.<sup>2</sup>

The passage in question was written near Aigues-Mortes and is found as a pensée at the end of his Portraits littéraires.<sup>3</sup> The passage reads: "Mon âme est pareille à ces plages où l'on dit que Saint Louis s'est embarqué, la mer et la foise sont depuis longtemps hélas! retirées."

A passage according with this is found in Arnold's "Dover Beach".<sup>4</sup>

"The sea of faith  
Was once, too, at the full and  
round earth's shore  
Lay like the folds of a bright  
girdle furled

\* \* \* \* \*

1. p. 348.

2. p. 104.

3. III, 540, 1839.

4. Works II, 56, 1858.





But now I only hear  
 Its melancholy, long,  
       withdrawing roar  
 Retreating, to the breath  
 Of the night-wind, down the  
       vast edges drear  
 And naked shingles of the world."

In 1850 Sainte-Beuve published his article Le Poëte Firdousi<sup>1</sup> in which he describes at length the story of Sohrab and Rustum. Three years later, Matthew Arnold's Sohrab and Rustum<sup>2</sup> appeared. Inasmuch as the story related in the poem is only one incident in Firdousi's long Shah-Nameh,<sup>3</sup> it would seem probable Arnold's attention was attracted to it by his perusal of the Causeries du lundi. Saintsbury has noticed this point in his History of Criticism.<sup>4</sup>

We have limited ourselves in the above citations, to similarities recognized by established critics. Many similarities might be pointed out which may or may not show relationship between the two men. Saintsbury has stamped these as "the ordinary plagiarism and parallel-passage inquiries of bad and dull critics." To avoid excess in this line we will content ourselves with very obvious resemblances. The general conclusion from the

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1. Causeries du lundi I, 332ff.

2. I, 89ff.

3. Le livre des rois, par le poete persan Firdousi, traduit par Jules Mohl, 3 vols., Paris, 1849.

4. III, 320.



points of similarity indicated does not show a deep influence of the French critic on Arnold's poetry. It seems rather to indicate that Arnold, naturally on the lookout for subject matter for his poetry, had taken striking passages or ideas which he came across in his reading of Sainte-Beuve and elaborated them in his poetry.



## Chapter IV

## The Notion of the Function of Criticism

Suggested by Sainte-Beuve

Arnold's poetry, however, did not bring him his fame nor gain him the place in literature accorded him by his contemporaries. His criticism won for him his position in the foremost rank of England's literary men. For us, it is interesting to note that Arnold's criticism bears striking resemblances to that of Sainte-Beuve. The latter in a pensée at the end of his Portraits littéraires has defined his idea of the critic's function in the following terms:<sup>1</sup> "Le critique n'est qu'un homme qui sait lire et qui apprend à lire aux autres." In another place he repeats the idea in almost the same terms:<sup>2</sup> "L'art de la critique dans son sens le plus pratique et le plus vulgaire, consiste à savoir lire judicieusement les auteurs et à apprendre aux autres à les lire de même en les épargnant les tâtonnements et en leur dégageant le chemin."

Arnold's definition of the function of English criticism strikingly resembles this in thought and phraseology. His terms of definition are:<sup>3</sup> "The duty of

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1. Portraits littéraires III 346.

2. Quoted by J. Warshaw in Modern Language Notes XXV, 77.

3. Quoted by J. Warshaw in Modern Language Notes XXV, 77.





English criticism is simply to know the best that is known and thought in the world, and by in its turn making this known, to create a current of true and fresh ideas." Arnold reiterates this idea with emphasis in another passage<sup>1</sup> in the Essays in Criticism: "I am bound by my own definition of criticism: a disinterested endeavor to learn and propogate the best that is known and thought in the world."

The idea of the interpretative function of criticism had not been exploited to any extent before Sainte-Beuve's time and, as this was one of the chief motives of the innumerable lundis and portraits which he published, any reader of his works would naturally have this idea impressed upon him. We are, therefore, fairly safe in assuming that Arnold got his idea of the use of criticism as a means of exciting public interest in an author or work from Sainte-Beuve.

\* \* \* \* \*

1. Works III, 42.



## Chapter V

Arnold's Style, Form of Composition, and  
General Method as modeled on Sainte-Beuve

Arnold's style in his essays also shows a great likeness to Sainte-Beuve's. It is markedly different from the formal "Addisonian prose" in vogue in England up to his time. We remark in reading it - to use Arnold's own words<sup>1</sup> - some of "Sainte-Beuve's elasticity and cheerfulness," some of "that gaiety, that radiancy as of a man discharging with delight the very office for which he was born, which, in the 'Causeries', make Sainte-Beuve's touch so felicitous, his sentences so crisp, his effect so charming." Indeed, were we to select a model for Arnold's style in these essays, we should instinctively turn to the Causeries of Sainte-Beuve rather than to Arnold's English contemporaries. The passage above cited continues to speak of "the openmindedness of Sainte-Beuve, the same firmness and sureness of judgment."<sup>2</sup> Naturally, even the cursory reader of Sainte-Beuve will have remarked these characteristics in his works. We have a concrete expression of it in a passage in the

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1. Mixed Essays, p. 242-3.

2. Ibid. p. 243.



Portraits littéraires,<sup>1</sup> "Ce que j'ai voulu en critique, ç'a été d'y introduire une sorte de charme et en même temps plus de réalité qu'on n'en mettait auparavant." Arnold's style was a great and refreshing novelty in England at the time, and, as he has especially called our attention to the quality and aim of Sainte-Beuve's literary style, we may justly conclude that the probabilities are in favor of his having imitated Sainte-Beuve in this particular.

If we remark a resemblance in the general style of Arnold's critical essays, we see even more clearly the resemblance in form between Arnold's literary work and Sainte-Beuve's. Until Arnold's time, the Addisonian essay had been the prevailing literary form for criticism, as Addisonian prose had been for prose in general. But Arnold introduced a modification in this respect also, a new species, far less stiff and formal than the Addisonian essay had been. This new species was none other than the flexible and intimate causerie, slightly modified, which Sainte-Beuve had used in his critical work. We find this noted in the article on Matthew Arnold in the supplement to The Dictionary of National Biography:<sup>2</sup> "Arnold modified considerably the

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1. III, 546.

2. XXII, 73.





form of English criticism by giving it the cast of the 'causerie', a method he had learned from the chief object of his admiration and imitation, Sainte-Beuve."

Another striking characteristic of Matthew Arnold's method of procedure that points very closely to the influence of Sainte-Beuve is the selection of persons of comparatively slight reputation as subjects to be treated at the same length and side by side with persons of greater note. Thus, in Matthew Arnold, Maurice de Guérin and Marcus Aurelius stand cheek by jowl and receive equal honors in the first series of the critical essays; in Sainte-Beuve, Goethe and Bazin rub elbows in the most democratic fashion. Lanson says of Sainte-Beuve's attitude in this:<sup>1</sup> "Il suffit qu'un homme ou une femme ait écrit quelques lettres, quelques lignes, pour lui appartenir." Arnold attempts to justify this procedure when he says:<sup>2</sup> "Now in literature besides the eminent men who have often far more than their deserts in the way of fame, there are certain personages who have been real men of genius, but who have remained obscure. It is salutary from time to time to come across a genius of this kind and to extract his honey. Often he has more of it for us than greater men."

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1. Histoire de la littérature française, Paris, 1912, p. 1042.

2. Essays in Criticism, p. 291.



The form of the essays thus indicates markedly Sainte-Beuve as Arnold's model. There are also connections in point of matter. In a number of instances; Arnold has selected for treatment the same subjects that Sainte-Beuve had previously treated. In Arnold's Essays in Criticism, First Series,<sup>1</sup> we find studies of Maurice de Guérin and Eugénie de Guérin to whom the general attention of society had been drawn by Sainte-Beuve's articles on them. The essay on Joubert occupies a somewhat similar position. There are no points of striking similarity between the articles by Sainte-Beuve and the one by Arnold on Joubert. Arnold evidently wrote after a direct study of Joubert, though the fact that Arnold had seen Sainte-Beuve's sketch of Joubert is made clear in his article,<sup>2</sup> "M. Sainte-Beuve has given of him, one of his incomparable portraits," and further along in the same essay,<sup>3</sup> "The volume attracted the attention of those who were best fitted to appreciate it (Fragments of Joubert edited by Chateaubriand, Paris, 1838) and profoundly impressed them. Sainte-Beuve gave of it, in the Revue de Dax Mondes the admirable notice of which we have already spoken." Thus, while Arnold's work is not directly modeled upon Sainte-Beuve's article, he had read the

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1. Works, III.

2. Works III, 291.

3. Works III, 299.



French article before writing his own and it is likely that the idea of treating Joubert in an article may have been suggested to him by Sainte-Beuve's having done so.

Arnold's familiarity with the Causeries on the two Guérins at the time he wrote his essays on them is obvious. We do not distinguish carefully between the brother and sister, because Sainte-Beuve treats both equally in his articles whether entitled Maurice or Eugénie and Arnold likewise has not confined himself exclusively to one or the other in either of his two essays. Arnold's articles on the brother and sister contain many direct references to Sainte-Beuve's articles on them. Thus, speaking of Maurice de Guérin, he says,<sup>1</sup> "The idea of this composition (le Centaur) came to him, M. Sainte-Beuve says, in the course of some visits which he made to the Museum of Antiquities in the Louvre." Again, we read,<sup>2</sup> "M. Sainte-Beuve tells of him two years later, appearing in society, a man of the world, elegant, even fashionable." Sainte-Beuve's passage in the Causeries du lundi<sup>3</sup> shows the closeness of Arnold's quotation: "Qui l'eut rencontré deux ans après mondain, élégant, fashionable même, causeur à tenir tête aux brillants causeurs." Arnold also speaks of "poems of

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1. Essays in Criticism, 124. In Sainte-Beuve, *Nouveaux lundis*, III, 158.

2. Essays in Criticism, 116.

3. XIV, 30.





Guérin, his journals, and a number of his letters collected by a devoted friend, M. Trebutien, and preceded by a notice of Guérin by the first of living critics, Sainte-Beuve."<sup>1</sup> In two places<sup>2</sup> Arnold remarks that: "M. Sainte-Beuve goes so far as to say that the sister's genius was equal, if not superior, to her brother's." The same passage in Sainte-Beuve runs:<sup>3</sup> "les Reliques d'une soeur du poëte, Eugénie de Guérin, son égale sinon sa supérieure en talent et en âme." Further similarities between the essays of the two men on these subjects are seen in the comparison of Maurice's work with that of the English lake poets, the description of the visit of La Morvonnais to Wordsworth at Rydal Mount, and the biographical details, which are almost identical.

The close resemblance of Arnold's articles on Joubert and the Guérins has lead J. Warshaw to attribute ulterior motives to Arnold in choosing them for subjects. He says,<sup>4</sup> "It sometimes occurred to Arnold to present continental subjects to that dense mass of Philistines in whom he was trying to 'inculcate intelligence in a high sense of the word.' What more simple than he should pitch upon Maurice de Guérin, upon Eugénie de Guérin, upon Joubert, because Sainte-Beuve had written

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1. Essays in Criticism, 88.
2. Ibid 96 and 137.
3. Causeries du lundi XV, 2.
4. Modern Language Notes XXV, 77.



illuminating little articles, and above all, handy little articles on them? Also, there was the advantage of maintaining an appearance of recondite wisdom before his benighted people and Arnold was not above such trivial vanities." We may remark in passing that Mr. Warshaw has shown a far from sympathetic tone in this article and is decidedly flippant in his explanation of Arnold's motives. However, the suggestion that Arnold probably got his ideas of treating these subjects from Sainte-Beuve cannot be lightly dismissed.

A further instance of Sainte-Beuve's influence on Arnold's criticism is seen in the latter's comparing English with foreign writers. Saintsbury remarks,<sup>1</sup> "The practice of going to outside literatures for comparison, Matthew Arnold got from Sainte-Beuve and the French." Arnold himself in general tells us:<sup>2</sup> "England is not all the world . . . . The English critic of literature must, therefore, dwell much on foreign thought." This innovation into English literature has been of considerable importance in checking a natural tendency toward insularity; and English literature has lost much of its provinciality and gained greatly in breadth since Arnold first announced to it this method of comparing

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1. Matthew Arnold, London, 1909, pp. 59-60.

2. Essays in Criticism, 48.



itself with the literatures of other lands for its own improvement. If we are to accept Saintsbury's idea just cited that Arnold got this essentially French idea of the universality of all criticism and the benefits of comparison of one of the component parts with another without regard to narrow national feeling from Sainte-Beuve, the importance of the influence is enhanced for us manyfold in view of its far-reaching and lasting effect upon English literature in general.





## Chapter VI

Curiosity as a Stimulus to Criticism  
in Arnold and in Sainte-Beuve

Another distinguishing trait of Sainte-Beuve's method which we find paralleled by Matthew Arnold is curiosity. In a conversation reported in C. A. Sainte-Beuve - Sa vie et ses oeuvres by the Vicomte d'Hanssonville,<sup>1</sup> Sainte-Beuve is quoted as saying, "J'ai vecu curieux et je mourrai curieux." We have details of this life of curiosity in the Portraits littéraires<sup>2</sup> where Sainte-Beuve describes his various peregrinations through the "XVIIIe siècle le plus avancé," the "école doctrinaire et psychologique du Globe," romanticism, Saint-Simonism, "le monde de La Mennais, encore très catholique," Calvinism, and Methodism. "Dans toutes ces traversées," he tells us, "je n'ai jamais aliéné ma volonté et mon jugement . . . . Ma curiosité, mon désir de tout voir, de tout regarder de près, mon extrême plaisir de trouver le vrai relatif de chaque chose et de chaque organisation m'entraînaient à cette série d'expériences." Arnold was evidently thinking of this trait of curiosity in Sainte-Beuve when, in his article on Sainte-Beuve in the Encyclopaedia Britannica,<sup>3</sup> he

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1. Paris, 1875. p. 277.

2. III, 545.

3. 11th Edition.



quotes Sainte-Beuve as saying: "Literary opinions occupy very little place in my life and thoughts. What does occupy me seriously is life itself, and the object of it." In his obituary notice of Sainte-Beuve in The Academy,<sup>1</sup> Arnold says, "Sainte-Beuve stopped short at curiosity, at the desire to know things as they really are" - and a few lines further, "Let it be enough for him to have served this one need of his age." The importance which Arnold assigned to this trait in the critic is seen when we find him devoting the first two and one-half pages of his famous "Sweetness and Light" essay to defending this very point in Sainte-Beuve's character against a writer who censured him for it in The Quarterly Review. We make an excerpt from this reference<sup>2</sup> which is too long to quote entire, "Thinking enough was said to stamp M. Sainte-Beuve with blame if it was said that he was impelled in his operations as a critic by curiosity ... As there is a curiosity about intellectual matters which is futile, so there is a curiosity,- a desire after the things of the mind for their own sakes, and for the pleasure of seeing them as they are,- which is, in an intelligent being, laudable and natural." In regard to the word curiosity itself he says, "It is noticeable that the word curiosity which

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1. I, 31, of no. for Nov. 13, 1869.

2. Culture and Anarchy, 5,6.



in other languages is used in a good sense, to mean, as a high and fine quality of man's nature, just this disinterested love of a free play of the mind on all subjects, for its own sake, - it is noticeable, I say, that this word has in our language no sense but a bad and disparaging one."<sup>1</sup> The careful limitation of the word to its foreign sense and, then, the definition in almost the same words as Sainte-Beuve had used, and finally the defense of the idea as found in Sainte-Beuve, hardly leave room for doubt as to Sainte-Beuve's being the source of this idea for Arnold. Its importance for him, stated further on in the study just quoted, is shown by this short sentence which is almost a dictum, "Criticism, real criticism is essentially the exercise of this very quality (curiosity)." And, further along,<sup>2</sup> "Flutterings of curiosity, in the foreign sense of the word, begin to appear amongst us and it is in these that criticism must look to find its account." Thus, Arnold, like Sainte-Beuve before him, makes curiosity the basis and mainspring of critical activity. He very probably conceived this idea during his reading of Sainte-Beuve's works; for, whenever he speaks of it, he speaks of Sainte-Beuve in connection with it.

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1. Essays in Criticism, 18.

2. Ibid, 19.





Chapter VII  
Individualism and  
the Biographical Method

Like curiosity, individualism is another important and distinctive feature of Sainte-Beuve's procedure. Of Sainte-Beuve's individualism, Gustave Lanson tells us in his Histoire de la littérature française,<sup>1</sup> "Sainte-Beuve s'attache aux individus . . . . Il suit dans son origine, dans son éducation, dans ses fréquentations, dans toute sa vie intime et domestique, la formation, les agrandissements, les abaissements du caractère et de l'esprit. A la fin de ces minutieuses enquêtes, l'homme, et par l'homme le livre, se trouve relié à quelque courant connu et défini de la civilisation générale." Nothing could be more descriptive of Arnold's method than just these words. Warshaw says of this,<sup>2</sup> "Sainte-Beuve singled out the individual. That was the great point of his method. Arnold tried to imitate him in this and only partially succeeded and then chiefly in foreign subjects." These foreign subjects are especially Arnold's Maurice de Guérin, Eugénie de Guérin, and Joubert, in which Arnold has followed

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1. Edition 1912, p. 1041.

2. Modern Language Notes XXV, 78.



Sainte-Beuve's method more than in his later works. That is, he succeeds best in applying Sainte-Beuve's method in those essays in which he had Sainte-Beuve's articles on the same subjects upon which to model his own.

If Arnold, in his later works, fell more and more away from the spirit of Sainte-Beuve's individualism and the practice of his biographical method, he never entirely eliminated the influence.



Chapter VIII  
Disinterestedness  
in the two Authors

A very striking feature of Sainte-Beuve's criticism is the absence of polemic. He avoided this in consequence of his doctrine of disinterestedness. His idea of the critic's duty to be free from partisan influences is stated in a passage at the beginning of his article on Mademoiselle de l'Espinasse;<sup>1</sup> "Le critique ne doit point avoir de partialité et n'est d'aucune coterie. Il n'épouse les gens que pour un temps, et ne fait que traverser les groupes divers sans s'y enchaîner jamais. Il passe résolument d'un camp à l'autre; et de ce qu'il a rendu justice d'un côté, ce ne lui est jamais une raison de la refuser à ce qui est vis-à-vis. Ainsi, tour-à-tour, il est à Rome ou à Carthage, tantôt pour Argos tantot pour Ilion."

There is a striking likeness between this view and Arnold's statement of the doctrine of disinterestedness as he conceives it in his essay on Sweetness and Light;<sup>2</sup> "It is of the last importance the English criticism should clearly discern what rule for its course, in order to avail itself of the field now opening to it, and to produce fruit for the future, it ought to take. The

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1. Causeries du lundi II, 121.
2. Essays in Criticism, p. 20.



rule may be summed up in one word,- disinterestedness. And, how is criticism to show disinterestedness? By keeping aloof from what is called 'the practical view of things'; by resolutely following the law of its own nature, which is to be a free play of the mind on all subjects which it touches. By steadily refusing to lend itself to any of the ulterior, political, practical considerations about ideas, which plenty of people will be sure to attach to them ... but with which criticism has no business."

This fundamental idea of disinterestedness, here stated, is the basis of Arnold's favorite doctrine of "Sweetness and Light". This doctrine was directed against the prevailing worship of the material and the hostility to culture and ideas which were prevalent in England and which Arnold dubbed Philistinism, after the German Philister, a term applied by German students to wealthy middle-class people with no taste for the finer things of life. On the positive side Arnold upheld culture as opposed to the commonplace, and amenity of opinion, - in other words disinterestedness, - as opposed to violently polemical in articles which made friendly discussion impossible between persons of

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different views, whether political or religious. For there was no organ of universal opinion at the time in England; every periodical was devoted to furthering the interests of this or that religious sect or this or that political party.

Arnold practised "disinterestedness" as well as he could and championed it to such good purpose that the written expression of English opinion gradually took on a less violent and partisan tone until writers were able to express their opinions of things in a scientific way and without bringing in their private beliefs and prejudices. This trait in Arnold also parallels the trait in Sainte-Beuve who is the older of the two and had practised it and written on it before Arnold had.



## Conclusion

Is there any influence of Sainte-Beuve in Matthew Arnold's work? If so, is it important? The first of these two questions is readily answered. The influence is very patent to anyone who reads Arnold with a fore-knowledge of Sainte-Beuve's ideas and methods. The reader utterly unacquainted with Sainte-Beuve's works would likewise be struck by the many references to him which are found in Arnold's works, and by the flattering tributes Arnold pays his master. The second of the questions is more difficult to answer with accuracy. Anyone who attempts to trace the influence of one man upon another has a thankless task before him. Literary influence is something that cannot be measured in units of quality and quantity. The best one can do is to indicate more or less clearly the lines of influence and hint at rather than state the exact importance of it. Suffice it to say that we have in this case two men, leaders in the literatures of their respective countries. One is nearly a score of years older than the other, and has already fully established his method and style when the other starts to write. When the younger of the two travels to the country of the older man, he visits him and repeats the visit several years later. We constantly find



in the works of the younger writer passages mentioning the older man by name and expressing admiration for him. When this younger man starts to develop his style and method several important doctrines practised by the already-established critic reveal themselves as bases of his procedure. This, in brief, is the relation of Matthew Arnold, the younger man to Sainte-Beuve, the older man. In Arnold's works we find the same general notion of criticism, a style, form of composition and general method of procedure differing markedly from anything preceding it in England but resembling very closely the style, form and general method of Sainte-Beuve. Curiosity, individualism and disinterestedness as prime factors in the criticism of Sainte-Beuve are paralleled by similar curiosity, individualism and disinterestedness in Arnold. These parallels coupled with Arnold's friendly feeling toward Sainte-Beuve and his general admiration for his work make us feel that the influence, exerted on Arnold by Sainte-Beuve, was of fundamental importance.

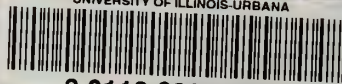








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